NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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103 FIRE TO RECEIVE TREATMENT

TUCSON, AZ (June 8, 2006) On May 27, 2006, the human caused 103 Fire began in remote terrain on the Coronado National Forest, south of Sierra Vista. By containment date of June 5, the fire had burned 1443 acres of Forest Service land, and 335 acres within Coronado National Memorial.. On May 30, the Burned Area Emergency Response team, formed by the Coronado National Forest and led by Bob Lefevre, Coronado National Forest Program Manager/Soils, Water, Air & Forestry, assessed the fire, conducting field surveys to identify impacts and to compile recommendations for emergency stabilization of the affected lands.

There are three grades of burn severity determined by the BAER Team:

- High fire severity – areas characterized by complete consumption of both canopy and ground fuels. Black to white ash, 1 to 3 inches thick, provides minimal effectiveness as ground cover, raising the possibility of extreme runoff events in the case of high intensity storms.
- Moderate fire severity – areas characterized by partial consumption of both canopy and ground fuels. Ash cover is mostly gray with litter structure intact in places, and the canopy cover contains mostly scorched needles. Ash depth is 2 to 3 inches.
- Low fire severity – areas characterized by incomplete consumption of both canopy and ground fuels and containing adequate effective ground cover. The litter layer is scorched with black ash retaining the structure of needles and leaves. The depth of the ash is 1 to 2 inches, with the litter intact below it.

Burn severity on the Forest portion of the fire is classified as 1% (6 acres) high severity, 6% (96 acres) moderate severity and 93% (1341 acres) low severity. Research indicates that the greatest effect to the soil and watershed after a fire is the lack of effective ground organic litter and vegetation. Therefore, the significance of high severity is not the amount, but the location and the effects it has on other natural processes, particularly hydrology and soil erosion immediately downstream. As a result, it was determined that approximately 1.5 miles of Forest Road 61 (Montezuma Pass Rd.) are directly at risk of being destroyed by increased runoff, debris flows and rock falls. In addition, parts of the Arizona Trail, as well as numerous non-system trails, were burned.

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In response to these conditions, the BAER Team recommends replacing and/or cleaning culverts, patrolling during and following storms to prevent culvert failure, placing warning signs in English and Spanish at all entry points to the burned area and stabilizing damaged portions of the Arizona Trail. The Team is also suggesting the contour falling of trees above trails and roads and broadcast seeding.

It is hoped that the implementation of the proposed work will be completed on Forest land before the first significant rain takes place, which is expected in early July. The timeline for treatment implementation for the Coronado National Memorial is unknown at this time.

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